

The Cost of Training Iraqi Police

By Andrea Mitchell
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The cost of training a new police force for the new Iraq is higher than you might expect and much higher than the same kind of work here at home.

IRAQI POLICE recruits are now being trained by the U.S. military on the streets of Baghdad. But soon, 1,500 private trainers hired by the State Department will take over training 32,000 Iraqi recruits, over the next 18 to 24 months, at a military base to be rebuilt in neighboring Jordan.

The contractor: DynCorp International, a company in charge of screening and training foreign police in Haiti, Bosnia and now Iraq. But, at what cost?

According to the help-wanted notice on DynCorp's Web site, the company will pay as much as \$153,600 for senior people in Iraq for one year. On top of that, they get all their living expenses, and most of their salary is tax-free - a package that will cost taxpayers as much as \$400,000 to put each trainer in Iraq.

Private contractors make the kind of salaries military police only dream of earning. "I can tell you this - none of our ordinary troops are making that kind of money. Many of them are having families at home that are suffering because they don't have enough money even to make it through the month," says **U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky**, D.-Ill.

And most police back home don't make out nearly as well as DynCorp's police trainers. Veteran Philadelphia police earn \$53,000 a year - \$100,000 less. A U.S. official acknowledged that \$153,000 is the top pay bracket, adding that most trainers will make about \$100,000.

So far, the cost for DynCorp's police training program: \$50 million. The initial contract was approved quietly and quickly, with only one other company invited to bid. The administration tells Congress the final cost will be \$800 million more over the next two years.

So are the DynCorp employees worth their big salaries? The work is high-risk. Three weeks ago, three DynCorp security men guarding embassy employees in Israel were killed by a bomb in the Gaza Strip.

Doug Brooks of the International Peace Operations Association represents a group of federal contractors, "They have to go into a place where they're quite likely to be shot at quite a bit. It's not going to be a job anybody's going to take. I guarantee you if they could pay less in salaries, they probably would."

NBC repeatedly asked DynCorp, its parent company and the State Department for interviews about the police training contract. They all refused - even though they are spending tax dollars.

But congressional critics are demanding more accountability on these contractors, especially with the White House about to get another \$87 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan.